1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

Usually the girl's party pays the costs of all the ceremonies in her village, while the boy's party pays at his village. Possibly, though we were never actually able to determine the proportion, the costs in the end are about the same for both parties. The boy's father has to pay out more in actual cash, but has to bear a lesser expense in the home in connection with the preparations. In reply to our enquiries, we were given various estimates, but probably no one knows exactly just what the costs are. Sometimes there may have been an exaggeration, but in the light of their economic level the costs are staggering. The cost of a regular marriage is hardly ever less than thirty rupees per family and it ranges from this anywhere up to one hundred rupees per family. In the latter case the people must have originally greater resources and feel that they must do things more lavishly. As the Kol almost never has any money saved or in hand, most money for such expenses must be borrowed; and with the economic level as it is the repayment of such loans is practically impossible. The debtor becomes a virtual slave to the *malguzar* from whom he borrows the money.

The marriages described above bear many marks of, and resemblances to, Hindu marriages. It is believed that in the main the above is a fairly consistent account of the Kol types of alliances. Enquiry from other places show certain variations in practice and order. There are still many details to be filled in, and there are many variant practices yet to be noted and compiled. The process is a complicated one, and without doubt there is considerable variation between village and village in the matter of details.

POLYGYNY. [If the husband can afford the added expense it is not uncommon for him to have two wives.] In a case where there are two wives, it is usually discovered that the second "wife" has not been married with all the ceremonies as was the first, and that in reality she is just "kept." This arrangement however is considered legal and binding and a feast to the local group usually atones for the irregularity of the procedure. In our survey of Barela we found that there were three households in which more than one wife was found. In one of these instances a quarrel was then in progress between the wives and twice within the period of two weeks the aggrieved wife had run away and the man had to go out and search for her. In Panagar one Kol was found to have five wives, one of whom boasted to us that it was a sign of strength on the part of the husband. But a man standing by slyly remarked: "But look at their clothes and their condition." Kols expect their wives to work and so they are often looked upon as

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

595 an economic asset. If there should be two or more women in the family, one of whom is married and the other just kept, their respective rights were said to depend solely upon the will of the husband and it was not admitted that any of them had greater rights than the others. Their children have equal rights and no discrimination is made between them. If the wife is barren and the other has sons, the property upon his death reverts to the sons. If both "wives" have sons it is divided at death according to the husband's expressed wish or by a decision of the *panchayat*.

[831] We did not find much sexual laxity among the Kols; but the Hindus assert, whether from knowledge or prejudice it is hard to say, that the sexual relations of the Kols are very loose. A Malguzar reported that in some villages under his jurisdiction where Kols happened to be in the majority he knew of at least one case of a Kol woman having several husbands, a sort of polyandry, and that the men frequently exchanged wives.

586 623 692 DIVORCE. It is not uncommon for a man and his wife to separate but as long as this separation is not sanctioned by the *panchayat* it involves certain disabilities. The *panchayat* never takes the initiative nor does it advise or suggest divorce—rather the opposite—but it has to act if the separation is to have official sanction. The usual grounds for separation and divorce are:

1. Sterility of the wife
2. Sexual unchastity of either
3. Quarrelsomeness in the home
4. Laziness resulting in the neglect of household duties and support of the family
5. Any tendencies such as thievery, frequent absences from home without apparent reasons, and the like

There are numerous variations in the process of securing this separation. It is usually considered more difficult for a man to get rid of his wife than it is for the wife to get rid of her husband. The matter is first officially brought to the attention of the local *panchayat* by either of the aggrieved parties. In some cases the local *panch* has full authority, but in Maihar State we found that if, after investigation, the local *panch* thought there was a good case for divorce, the matter [184 564] is referred to an intercaste *panchayat*; one which should include members from seven different groups or castes. This seems to be an exception, and when asked what castes could act together they mentioned only three: Kol, Kurmi and Chamar.

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159 I have tried to be an honest man and the police and government [648 forest officers trust me and have just offered me the post of *Sarkari* 622] *Muhaddam* (government headman) of my village. This is a very high 554] honour for me for which my friends will respect me very much.

BAJRANJI: A KOL AND A FAMINE[1]

I was born in Rewa, my *desh*, but I have no idea of the date of my birth nor of the names of my father or mother. When my parents left Rewa and came to Barela I was just an infant and didn't know much about what was going on. After three or four years my father died in Lunsar village while my mother died in Barela when I was thirty years old.

When my father died I did not get much property, but whatever I got was used up in feeding the people of the community at the time of his death, and later on more was spent on the ceremonial feast following my mother's death. At that time I had a few head of cattle, but soon after four of them were killed and eaten by tigers.

I have been married twice, and by my first wife had two children. The first child was a girl who is now married and who has children of her own. She is about twenty-one years old now. The second child was a boy who is now about twelve years of age. But when these children were about twelve and eight respectively their mother became [587] very ill and died. Whatever money I had, all was spent on her for her recovery, but it was of no use. Then I married another wife and this cost me to a great extent the remaining money that I had. [434] Between the two I spent all the money which I possessed, which was about Rs. 300/- in cash and I found myself moneyless.

When I was a boy I was very eager to learn, but it was very difficult for a Kol to think of studying with the Brahmins. The village school seemed reserved for them. So my parents could not send me and they didn't care much about my education, and though I couldn't [212] study I made friends with an educated boy and he helped me and I finished the first Hindi book, but that too I have forgotten and cannot now read nor write.

When my mother died there were three of us: my sister, my [164] brother and myself. Both my brother and sister have since died of plague here in Barela, but I was saved by God's grace. About eight years ago my brother died leaving his wife and children. I do not [595] keep her with me in our home for I know that it would be hard on me and my wife and that if I keep her it would really mean that there will

1 See plate XXVI.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

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be two wives in my house and they will always fight and quarrel, which
[595] I don't like at all. And I can only support one wife.

I have a second wife, but only one. She helps me in my daily
[434] work and comes out with me into the fields and helps me dig and till the ground and together we earn about eight annas a day. At other times we work on the farm which we rent. We have about one acre and must give one-third of the produce to the *malguzar*. If the crops
[241] are good we get some benefit, but if they are not it is not worth the labour. I sow my fields in pulse, wheat and *kodo*. (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*). Often we get enough to eat for the whole year from our field. For about four to six months we eat *kodo* and then for three to four months we eat wheat and in this way provide for our food.
[464] This year (1937) our crops failed badly and we did not get much out of our field so we have to work as day labourers wherever we could get work. Farming brings us less return than daily coolie work, even
[427 314] though the latter is irregular. I have also taken a contract for a piece of ground where lac trees grow and pay rupees five a year for the privilege of collecting the lac. The contract is for twenty years and is made with the owner of the forest in Silgnor village. I also graze my cattle there, and after deducting my animal tax I get a profit of Rs. ten or twelve per year. I don't like to work as a coolie as we are often mistreated when under the authority of one man. I prefer to take or make a contract with people who are good farmers and thus go and work in their fields according to my own free choice and desire. Thus I am saved from all kinds of mistreatments which are meted out by owners or supervisors, and this, which is true of me, is true of all members of our Kol community. We would prefer to die of hunger than to have our liberty taken away and be treated as slaves.

Once when I was very young a great crisis befell our family.
[731] It was at the time when almost the whole of India suffered from a great famine (1899-1900). As my father was dead the support of the family fell upon the shoulders of my mother. Every morning and evening she used to cut grass wherever she could gather it and sell it to the people who could pay. She used to bring roots from the jungles and prepare a sort of bread for us out of them. She even brought the leaves of certain kinds of trees and made them do as vegetables in our rude food. Oh, it was a very hard time for us, but a mother's love and care saved us from that great famine. She used to work all day long; and though she seemed to be very old she worked like a young woman. Finally, after it was over she fell sick and died. She blessed us before she died. Her blessings are still with me and since then I have not suffered the want of anything. Now I have a *pakka* house.

1: Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

that amount and that the money is being used in my trade of buying and selling wood. He got very angry at me for that and took away all the wood that I had, along with my bullock cart, and brought them to Barela. He not only took these things but also paid my debt at the money-lender's and took all our jewellery which I had left as security. So we became dependent upon him again, and our condition seemed helpless. 159 426

For two years both my wife and myself had a very hard time. We had no tools to work with, nor money, nor clothes, and also no heart to work anywhere. I borrowed Rs. 2/- but that amount was all spent for food. Later we took courage and again started to sell wood. We used to go out to the jungles together and I used to carry over a *mound* a day to Jubbulpore, a distance of eight miles each way. But this heavy work was too much for me and I became ill. For two more years we suffered very much. Father took away all that we had and so we were again without anything. After my health was recovered I again began to sell some wood and little by little I was able to carry greater loads to the city. By the money thus earned I was able to buy a few tools and by the third year we were again independent, and these tools are still (1937) helping me to retain my self respect and earn a living for my family. 159

At present I have learned to do many kinds of work: especially the work of a mason which I prefer above the others. I also do some carpentry work when it is available. I am able, when I work, to earn from eight annas to a rupee a day, and this is enough. But if there should be a long period without work we suffer. [465]

I am still on bad terms with my father and while I am now living in Barela I am living in a separate house which I rent for eight annas a month. My sister is not yet married though she is about fourteen or fifteen years old. My first baby died when it was a month old but the next child, a son, is still living. I have only one wife. I don't want to keep two wives because they are no advantage and full of troubles. [578 427] [595]

Manbodhi: A Centenarian Kol

I belong to the Shivari family of Kols and was born in Rewa State about 100 years ago. When I was born my father was working as a serf for some farmer. When I was about 25 years old my father died, but he had left Rewa State when I was but fifteen days old. My maternal uncle brought our family to Jubbulpore where we stayed a few weeks and then started on foot to Nagpur (about 200 miles).